

BOOKREVIEW

Verma, Vijay Chandra. *Death of a Lover*. Ranchi : Institute for Social Development and Research. 2018. Price : Rs. 210.00, Pp. 46, ISBN: 978-93-84686-75-8

Dr. Vijay Chandra Verma's debut tragedy captioned *Death of a Lover* deals with madness of love of teenagers of both genders, psychologically as well as biologically in their flesh and bones. The budding Indian English playwright Dr. Verma's seriousness, consciousness, politeness, creativity, discipline, caring nature, love for our glorious tradition and hatred and dissatisfaction with contemporary social, political, religious degeneration have made him different from other writers. The present tragedy is the culmination of his solicitous and observant nature. He himself reveals that the tragedy is based on real incident and pastiche of his mental agony. It is a semi-autobiographical creative outgrowth of Dr Verma. It reflects the transitional phase of life and society.

The tragic story has been set in semi urban background of Kahalgaon under Bhagalpur district of Bihar which is popularly known for NTPC. Because of NTPC that small bazar with rural settings has crossed through cultural, social, economic and religious transitions. People of all over India employed at NTPC have changed the psyche and life style of the people of Kahalgaon in general and teenagers in particular. Dr Verma has presented the realistic picture of transitional society. In this advanced technological world, he has strived to write a drama for articulating his inner struggle. It is evident that drama in India has a grand old history. Its origin can be traced back to the Vedic Period. Bharata's *Natyashastra* is the first and the most significant work on Indian poetics and drama. Here Bharata considers drama as the fifth Veda. The supreme achievement of Indian Drama undoubtedly lies in Kalidasa, the Shakespeare of India. The rise of the modern drama dates back to the 18th century when the British Empire strengthened its power in India. With the impact of Western civilization on Indian life, a new renaissance dawned on Indian arts including drama. Dramatists like Manjeri Isvaran, Nissim Ezekiel, Lakhan Dev, Gurcharan Das, G.V. Dasani, Pratap Sharma, Asif Currimbhoy, Gieve Patel and Pritish Nandy made significant contribution in uplifting the Indian English drama. Contemporary Indian drama is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical qualities. Dr. Verma has very realistically tried to depict the treatment of the problematics of contemporary Indian subjectivity on the various axis of gender, sexuality, history, politics, money mindedness, lust, treachery, tradition, class and socio-cultural change in his play. It reflects his creative and critical sensibility. He has also expressed his inner realizations by emanating poetic and critical compositions. He is really a sensible writer who has struggled hard for delineating his feelings and emotions.

In the tragedy he has created real characters of his surroundings with fictitious names. The play is divided into five acts depicting natural beauty and

college life. It has been set in traditional semi urban town facing cultural invasion. It deals with two innocent unidirectional love story of Richa and Monu as well as Vishal and Priya. All are students of class eleven i.e. they have just enrolled in a college. In my opinion their love stories are not treated as real love or permanent love because. I consider these love stories as emotional infatuation and gullibility developed because of cultural, social, psychological and biological transitions faced by the teenagers of contemporary society. In the opening act the playwright has very realistically presented the first day feelings and curiosity of the students. The Students passing their tenth board examinations from various schools join college for further study. They enjoy first transitional phase in their lives i.e. from disciplined student life to total freedom. This transition affects some serious, curious and intelligent students. They are worried about their career and have joined some coaching classes. Because of total freedom and harmonal changes these teenage immature students become the victim of mundane attractions. In the first meeting the protagonist Vishal and Atul develop intimacy and decide to join a coaching. In the beginning of the play Vishal appears to be a very serious, diligent, honest, punctual and career-oriented student. His behaviour makes him popular among his friends, his seniors and his teachers. But the playwright uses supernatural elements to arouse the suppressed desires of Vishal. That is the turning point in his life. By the use of supernatural elements, the dramatist has twisted the direction of the drama like that of William Shakespeare. Vishal meets an angel in dream and becomes the victim of infatuation and transition. In his coaching class he meets a beautiful girl student named Priya. Without knowing her reality and family background he falls in love with her at first sight. This is the unidirectional love or one-sided love. Despite his one-sided love he is all attentive to his studies. But there was a change in his routine. Being a serious student, he spends his more and more time in studies and stays along with his coaching teacher. Consequent upon he returns his home late and does not share any responsibility of household affairs. His parents, brother, sister and sister-in-law scold and torture him time and again. The feelings of negativity, dejection, inferioritycomplex encircle his mind. Dejection in home, lust for wealth and frustration in one-sided love are the root cause behind the sufferings and mental imbalance of a brilliant, curious, punctual and studious student like Vishal.

In the opening three acts the dramatist has presented the very real picture of semi-urban transitional society. In these acts he depicts the college life of teenagers and love story of Richa and Monu. Richa falls in love with Monu at first meeting without knowing the opinion and feelings of Monu. Monu is not a serious and responsible student as presented by the author. He is a typical transitional character. He represents social and psychic transition of that semi-urban society. With the help of Shilpi, sister of Monu Richa conveys her infatuation for Monu. Shilpi reveals this love affair before Monu, but he is not serious about that love. He has no interest in Richa's feelings and emotions. Richa also represents

transitional changes in society and life. She becomes mad in love of Monu. One fine day she herself expresses her pious love before Monu but Monu outrightly denies which shocks her very much. Consequent upon she attempts to suicide herself by burning her body. Her mother saves her life. Priya and Shilpi sympathise her and teaches her the lesson of reality. Richa realises her guilt but does not get rid of that infatuation. She along with her mother leaves that place. In this manner the unidirectional infatuation ends. Through this depiction the dramatist has presented the real picture and mindset is town.

In further next two acts the dramatist has artistically delineated catastrophe happened in the life of the protagonist Vishal because of his transitional mind. He feels negation and dejection of family members and rejection and neutrality in his unidirectional love for Priya. Like Richa he becomes mentally imbalanced and expresses his inner sufferings before one of his friends Vivek. He further decides to share his feelings to Priya concerning his true love to Priya. But Priya rejects his love which breaks his heart. Consequent upon a typical traditional, responsible and studious student at the teen age of his life becomes the victim of bad habits. He smokes cigarette to get rid of his mental pain. This is the real picture of this transitional society. His sister and his brother-in-law keep eyes on the wealth of his parents. They are typical vultures and machiavellian characters. His brother-in-law keeps wine in the house of traditional family which reflects transitional mindset of that semi-urban society. In his mental agony Vishal drinks two bottles of wine to be relieved of this lustful and money-minded environment. He becomes unconscious. Being in temptation his brother-in-law and sister leave him in that critical condition to die; his parents also behave similarly. And ultimately God accepts Vishal's prayer and frees him from this self-centred society.

The tragedy has a well-constructed complex plot depicted in lucid language, arousing pity and fear in readers. By depicting real picture of the contemporary transitional society, the playwright Dr Verma has tried to instil in the mind of readers by highlighting dark impacts of transition from one culture to another and disciplined life to total freedom. Really speaking it is a wonderful piece of tragedy written by a promising poet, critic, novelist and dramatist.

Reviewer : Dr. Atal Kumar, Associate Professor, Department of English, P.G. Centre, Gaya College, Gaya.